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THE QUESTION OF CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTION TO MILITARY SERVICE

Letter dated 22 April 1998 from the Permanent Representative of Singapore to the United Nations Office at Geneva addressed to the Chairman of the Commission on Human Rights

1. On behalf of the co-signatories, I transmit* a joint letter on the question of conscientious objection to military service (item 22).

2. We would request that this joint letter be circulated as an official document of the fifty-fourth session of the Commission on Human Rights.

(Signed): SEE CHAK MUN
Ambassador

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* The attachment is circulated as received, in the language of submission only.

Annex

22 April 1998

HE Amb Jacob S Selebi
Chairman, 54th Session
Commission on Human Rights

Dear Amb Selebi

QUESTION OF CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTION TO MILITARY SERVICE (ITEM 22)

The delegations represented below would like to refer to the draft resolution submitted by Finland regarding conscientious objection to military service under Item 22 contained in document E/CN.4/1998/L.93.

2 National defence is a fundamental sovereign right under international law. Where individual beliefs or actions run counter to such a right, the right of a state to preserve the security of the nation must prevail. Article 29 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights as well as Article 18 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights recognises that the exercise of the rights and freedoms of the individual is subject to the necessity of ensuring public order and the general welfare of the society.

3 Where a state has established a compulsory military service system under which every citizen is legally required to serve military service, it is then a question of equality before the law. Allowing any group for whatever reasons to be excluded from the compulsory military service would compromise the universality of the application of the law.

4 For the above reasons, we dissociate ourselves from the Finnish draft resolution.

5 We would request that this letter be circulated as an official document of the 54th session of the Commission on Human Rights.

Yours sincerely

(List of co-signatories attached)

22.4.98 (1230)

List of co-signatories

1. Delegation of the People's Republic of China
2. Delegation of the Arab Republic of Egypt
3. Delegation of the Islamic Republic of Iran
4. Delegation of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan
5. Delegation of the Republic of Lebanon
6. Delegation of the Union of Myanmar
7. Delegation of Singapore
8. Delegation of the Republic of Sudan
9. Delegation of the Arab Republic of Syria
10. Delegation of Thailand
11. Delegation of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam

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